Identification and Diagnosis of ADHD among Primary School Children in Ebonyi State Southeast Nigeria: Implications for Effective Classroom Management/Interventions.

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Abstract
This study examined the prevalence of ADHD among primary school children in Ebonyi state South east Nigeria and its attendant classroom management implications for teachers. The study employed descriptive research design survey. The population consists of 7,970 primary school teachers in Ebonyi state. Simple random technique was used to select 630 primary school teachers from both public and private schools drawn from 130 schools. The participants comprise of 230 male and 400 female teachers with teaching experience ranging from 1-30 years. A checklist which was in line with the research questions outlined for the survey on the three hallmark symptoms of ADHD namely inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsivity together with the respective behavioral disorders associated with each symptom, teachers awareness of these symptoms and classroom control methods adopted by teachers in handling children with ADHD was constructed and used in gathering information from the respondents. The researchers also used oral interviews to supplement the data obtained via the use of checklist. The data collected was analyzed using percentages. The result showed the prevalence of all the three types of ADHD in the study area with ADHD, combined presentation as the most common recording 50%. Findings also revealed that primary school teachers in the study area are unaware of ADHD symptoms among the children they teach, which resulted in the use of unprofessional classroom behavior modification approach such as spanking, criticism and corporal punishment in the management of ADHD in classrooms. The study recommended among others that epidemiological survey on ADHD should be carried out in Ebonyi state primary school children for effective diagnosis.

Keywords: Identification, diagnosis, ADHD, classroom management.

Introduction
The acronym ADHD stands for “Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder” It is a disorder with hallmark symptoms of inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsivity (e.g., calling out, leaving the seat, interrupting activities, saying the wrong things at the wrong time etc). The
behaviors of some students with ADHD normally takes a lot of time away from class instructions and ultimately leading to class disruptions. A normal classroom setting requires children to sit still, listen quietly, pay attention and follow the instructions. Children with ADHD find it extremely difficult to do the above mentioned things not because they are not willing, but because their brain won’t let them. This poses a serious challenge to classroom teachers as it complicates their work vis-à-vis classroom management and control.

Classroom management is a term mostly used by teachers to describe the process of ensuring that classroom lessons run very smoothly despite disruptive behaviors by students. It is also seen as the ability of a teacher to maintain order and discipline among the class pupils with objective of creating conducive learning atmosphere. The term also implies prevention of disruptive behaviors in the classroom. Disruptive behaviors of pupils with ADHD can be overwhelming to the teachers at times in a traditional classroom setting as they struggle with the choice of the appropriate classroom management technique to adopt. Students/pupils with ADHD usually suffer the consequences for their problems in having low grades, after receiving scolding and corporal punishment, teasing from peers, and psychological problems such as low self-esteem. The teachers at times, end up feeling offended as they take complaints from parents who feel their kids are being cheated of their instructions. This occasionally induces feelings of guilt in teachers because they may feel that they cannot teach the child not knowing that the child has ADHD.

A child’s academic success is often linked with his or her ability to attend to tasks and classroom work cum expectations without much distraction. Such skills enables a student to acquire necessary information, complete assignments, and participates in class room activities and discussions (Forness & Kavale, 2001). Symptoms of ADHD are diagnosed more in boys than in girls; most research suggests that the conditions are diagnosed four to nine times more often in boys than girls (Bender, 1997; Halowell, 1994; Rief, 1997).

For some years now, ADHD was taken to be a childhood disorder that normally disappears with the advent of adolescence; but studies have substantiated that the condition is not limited to children. It is known that while the symptoms of the disorders may change as the child advances in age, many children with ADHD do not grow out of it (Mannuzza, klein, Bessler, Malloy, & Lapadula, 1998). For a better understanding of the behavior exhibited by children with ADHD, the fourth edition of Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) (1994) articulated the following behaviors:

- Fidgeting with hands or feet or squirming in their seat.(adolescent with ADHD may appear restless);
- Difficulty remaining seated when required to do so;
- Difficulty sustaining attention and waiting for a turn in tasks, games, or group situations;
- Blurting out answers to questions before the questions have been completed;
- Difficulty following through instructions and organizing tasks;
- Shifting from one unfinished activity to another;
- Failing to give close attention to and avoiding careless mistakes;
- Losing things carelessly for tasks or activities;

For some years now, ADHD was taken to be a childhood disorder that normally disappears with the advent of adolescence; but studies have substantiated that the condition is not limited to children. It is known that while the symptoms of the disorders may change as the child advances in age, many children with ADHD do not grow out of it (Mannuzza, klein, Bessler, Malloy, & Lapadula, 1998). For a better understanding of the behavior exhibited by children with ADHD, the fourth edition of Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) (1994) articulated the following behaviors:

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- Losing things carelessly for tasks or activities;
- Difficulty in listening to others without being distracted or interrupting,
- Wide ranges in mood swings, and
- Great difficulty in delaying gratification

Not all these behaviors as stated by DSM-IV appear in all situations. For instance, many children might have only ADHD; others have academic or behavior diagnoses. For example, it has been researched and recorded that approximately a quarter to one-third of all children with ADHD also has learning disabilities (Forness & Kavale 2001; Robelia, 1997; Schiller, 1996).

The American Psychiatric Association has also identified three types of ADHD namely:

1. **Inattentive type:** Children who have this type of ADHD have difficulty paying attention. They are easily distracted but don’t have issues with impulsivity or hyperactivity. This sometimes referred to as Attention –Deficit Disorder (or ADD)

2. **Hyperactivity-Impulsive type:** Children who have this type of ADHD have symptoms of hyperactivity and feel the need to move constantly. They also struggle with impulse control.

3. **Combined type:** This is the most common type of ADHD. Children who have it show all of the symptoms described above.

Children with ADHD present a wide range of challenges which has a direct bearing on classroom management and control. Some of these challenges include among others difficulty in following instructions, difficulty in taking notes, inability to write assignments, demanding attention by talking out of turn or walking around the class, day dreaming during class, acting without thinking, difficulty in paying attention, forgetfulness etc. Most primary school teachers in Ebonyi state South east Nigeria seem to be bereft of ideas of classroom interventions for the student with ADHD based upon a solid foundation of general behavior intervention principles.

This study therefore seeks to investigate the symptoms and behavioral patterns of primary school children with ADHD in Ebonyi state with the view of identifying children with it, x-raying intervention strategies for an effective classroom management as well as creating it awareness among the teachers.

**Statement of the Problem**

Studies have shown that children with ADHD are at high risk for academic underachievement or failure despite having average intellectual abilities. Since ADHD is a childhood problem that transcends into adulthood, it has a link to the persistent increase in low level of academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi State. For instance, in the 2014 West African Examination Result, out of 25,750 students that sat for the exams, only about 5,620 obtained credit in five subjects including English language and Mathematics. For this reason, teacher’s ability to identify, diagnose and intervene in the cases and plights of students with ADHD at primary school level becomes very necessary since, ADHD is a defect among kids that can result in extremely poor academic performance. But, in most primary schools in Ebonyi State however, teachers seem to restrict their activities in the classroom to direct instruction and indoctrination of the students without being able to observe the students closely to identify their academic problems and try to mediate in their situations. This could be attributed to the fact that some teachers lack basic qualifications and
skills in education while some others go into teaching just to eke out a living without having the interest of students at heart.

ADHD is a very big threat that seems not to have being effectively handled by both teachers and the government in most developing countries. This is because, some teachers assume that, it is usual to have pupils with very poor academic performance due to social, economic and political factors without taking into consideration the psychological disposition and emotional stability of these students. Children with ADHD have unique needs and if these needs are not professionally met; it poses a serious danger to their academic, social and psychological development.

According to a report by U.S Department of Education (2008), when a child exhibits behaviors associated with ADHD, consequences may include difficulties with academics and with forming relationships with his or her peers if appropriate instructional methodologies and interventions are not implemented. Also, Smith, Robinson, and Segal (2016) opined that a child with the symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity due to ADD/ADHD, can cause many problems if left untreated. Children who can’t focus and control themselves may struggle in school, get into frequent trouble, and find it hard to get along with others or make friends. These frustrations and difficulties can lead to low self-esteem as well as friction and stress for the whole family. Furthermore, it may be difficult at times for the teachers to distinguish between behaviors associated with attention deficit disorder, normal “kid behavior,” certain medical conditions, psychological disorders, and stressful life events in children under a normal classroom setting by mere looking at few signs.

Majority of the parents in the study area do not have background awareness that some of the disruptive behaviors exhibited by their children are clear symptoms of ADHD. This can be so frustrating and exasperating for the parents as they lack effective parenting strategies that could go a long way in correcting the behaviors. Based on the foregoing, it in the interest of this study to identify students with ADHD in primary schools in Ebonyi state southeast Nigeria for diagnosis and also bring to limelight the challenges they pose to teachers in terms of classroom management and control thereby proffering appropriate interventional strategies in managing these children.

**Purpose of the Study**

The study examined ADHD symptoms and behavior among primary school children in Ebonyi state south east Nigeria and the challenges children with ADHD pose to teachers in classroom management. Specifically, the study intends to:
- Identify children exhibiting symptoms of ADHD in primary schools settings in Ebonyi State, Nigeria
- Find out how teachers in primary school in Ebonyi State manage ADHD in classrooms.
- To investigate the awareness of teachers of the existence of ADHD among primary school children in Ebonyi state among their teachers.

**Significance of the Study**

The results of this research will be of immense benefit to policy makers in the educational sector in the state and Nigeria at large especially curriculum planners. This research will also be useful to parents in the study area and beyond who needs to start looking out for these
symptoms in children for possible diagnosis and treatment. Also psychiatrics and educational psychologist in the study area need to be aware of this disorder among children so as to open up a new vista of research on ADHD that will enlighten the public and stakeholders in the educational sector. Finally, the result of this research will provide data to other researchers who may wish go into deeper investigation and inquiry on ADHD among children in the study area.

**Research Questions**

To guide this survey, the following research questions were formulated:
- What are the symptoms of ADHD among primary school children in Ebonyi state southeast Nigeria?
- Are primary school teachers in Ebonyi state aware of the symptoms of ADHD among the children they teach?
- How do primary school teachers in Ebonyi state manage children with ADHD in their classrooms and what are their challenges?

**Methodology**

This study employed descriptive research design of survey type. The population consists of 7,970 primary school teachers in Ebonyi state. Simple random technique was used to select 630 primary school teachers from both public and private schools drawn from 130 schools. The participants comprise of 230 male and 400 female teachers with teaching experience ranging from 1-30 years. A checklist which was in line with the research questions outlined for the survey on the three hallmark symptoms of ADHD namely inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsivity together with the respective behavioral disorders associated with each symptom, teachers awareness of these symptoms and classroom control methods adopted by teachers in handling children with ADHD was constructed and used in gathering information from the respondents. The checklist was constructively criticized and validated by two (2) research experts in measurement and evaluation and their constructive criticism and amendments were effected on the final copy. The researchers also used oral interviews to supplement the data obtained via the use of checklist. For a clearer understanding of the symptoms of ADHD and its three major types of ADHD that abounds, the researchers during the survey asked the respondents to rate the component behavior symptoms associated with the three hallmark symptoms of ADHD in accordance with that of Smith et al, 2016 as follows:

(a) **Inattentiveness:**

- Doesn’t pay attention to details
- Makes careless mistakes
- Has trouble staying focused; is easily distracted
- Appears not to listen when spoken to
- Has trouble remembering things and following instructions
- Has trouble staying organized, planning ahead, and finishing projects.
- Frequently loses or misplaces homework, books, toys, or other items
- Gets bored with a task before it’s completed
- Being forgetful.
(b) **Hyperactivity:**
- Constantly fidgets and squirms
- Often leaves his or her seat in situations where sitting quietly is expected
- Moves around constantly, often runs or climbs inappropriately
- Talks excessively.
- Has difficulty playing quietly or relaxing
- Is always “on the go”, as if driven by a motor.
- May have a quick temper.

(c) **Impulsivity:**
- Acts without thinking
- Blurt out answers in class without waiting to be called on or hear the whole question
- Can’t wait for his or her turn in line or in games.
- Says the wrong thing at the wrong time
- Often interrupts others
- Intrudes on other people’s conversation or games
- Inability to keep powerful emotions in check, resulting in angry outburst or temper tantrums
- Guesses, rather than taking time to solve a problem.

The survey lasted for the period of three months and data collected was analyzed using percentages.

**Results**

**Research question 1**
What are the symptoms of ADHD among children in primary school in Ebonyi state, Nigeria? Table 1 shows the percentage values of the responses?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses on ADHD symptoms in pupils</th>
<th>No. of teachers</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inattentiveness</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperactivity &amp; Impulsivity</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inattentiveness, Hyperactivity &amp; Impulsivity</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>630</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents in table 1, admitted having encountered with a lot of pupils having the symptoms of combined type of ADHD. 50% of the respondents which is about 315 out 630 concurred that they had seen the manifestation of the three hallmark symptoms of ADHD in children they teach. 30% which accounts for 189 out of 630 sampled population reported that they have encountering ADHD, Hyperactive-impulsive type while 20% of the respondents reported the presence of inattentive type of ADHD in the study area.
Research question 2
Are primary school teachers in Ebonyi state aware of ADHD symptoms among the children they teach?

Table 2: Presentation of research question 2 result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>No. of teachers</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of ADHD symptoms among primary school teachers in Ebonyi State. (YES)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unawareness of ADHD symptoms among primary school teachers in Ebonyi state. (NO)</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 630 100

In table 2, 10% of the participants accounting for 63 out of the 630 of the teachers sampled, agreed that they have heard of ADHD while 90% of them (i.e., 567 out of 630) reported that they are ignorant of the disorder among the children they teach.

Research question 3
How do primary school teachers in Ebonyi state manage children with ADHD in their classrooms and what are their challenges?

Table 3: Presentation of research question 3 results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Methods adopted in managing perceived symptoms of ADHD in pupils by teachers in Ebonyi state.</th>
<th>No. of teachers</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Spanking</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Criticism</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rewarding child’s behavior</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ignoring child’s misbehavior</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teasing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Use of abuses</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Detention</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Giving clear instructions</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Encouragement and use of an after-class chat</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Referrals for diagnosis</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Expulsion</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Other forms of punishment</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 630 100

In research question 3: tables 3, 60% of the respondents admitted the use of spanking in handling children with disruptive behavior caused by ADHD in classroom setting. 10% of the respondents agreed that they do criticize ADHD kids, 8% said that they used after-class chat and encouragement, 5% said they do reward the child behavior, 4% attested to the use of detention and ignoring the child’s misbehavior respectively, 2% said they use clear instructions in handling ADHD kids in the class, 2% also agreed abusing children with ADHD, another 2% of the participants said they have tried expulsion of the kid in extreme
cases, 1% said they tease kids out of frustration and another 2% of the respondents agreed that they used other forms of punishments.

**Table 4: Challenges teachers face in handling ADHD children in the classroom**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Challenges ADHD poses to classroom teachers in the study area</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lesson plan interruption</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dissipation of energy via spanking</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ignorance of the appropriate ADHD intervention strategies</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Consistent use of verbal reprimands in harsh tones</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Student confrontation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Children with ADHD have problems following instructions</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10% of the sampled population agreed that their major challenge in handling ADHD in the class is lesson plan interruption, 30% agreed that they dissipate their energy in spanking ADHD kids, 25% said that their greatest challenge is ignorance of ADHD, another 10% of the participants agreed to the use of consistent verbal reprimands in harsh tones in classroom management of children perceived to have ADHD, 5% said they confront the kids in class, another 25% mentioned difficulty in following instructions by ADHD kids.

**Discussion of Findings**

50% of the sampled population reported the preponderance of ADHD combined type. This implies that this is the most common type of ADHD prevalent in the study area. This is in line with the report of American Psychiatric Association that ADHD, combined presentation is the most common type. The respondents also attest to the presence of hyperactive-impulsive type of ADHD in the study area with a percentage score of 30 representing 189 out of the total of 630 participants. This implies that most primary school pupils in the study area shows signs of hyperactivity and impulsiveness in classroom such as constant fidgeting and squirming, talking excessively, having quick temper, acting without thinking, saying the wrong thing at the wrong time etc. They also reported the presence of inattentive type of ADHD with a percentage score of 20 meaning that 126 out of the 630 participants identified the symptoms of inattentive type of ADHD in various children they have taught and are still teaching indicating that these children exhibit disruptive behaviours such as not paying attention to details, appearing not to listen when spoken to, having trouble remembering things and staying organized, forgetfulness etc.

In research question 2: table 2, the researchers sought to know the awareness of ADHD among the primary school teachers. 10% of the participants agreed that they have heard of ADHD while 90% of them reported that they are ignorant of the disorder among the kids they teach. This shows that, they lack requisite knowledge of psychology of human learning. This makes it difficult for them to spot children with ADHD, since it is a psychological defect that affects learning. This also indicates that most of the teachers in the study area payless attention to the learning behaviours and dispositions of the children in class. They tend to practice direct instruction type of teaching which only aim at filling the students with information without considering whether they understand lesson content or not.
In research question 3: tables 3 and 4, the researchers explored the classroom management techniques primary school teachers use in managing the perceived symptoms of ADHD in children they teach and the concomitant challenges it has on them. 60% reported the use of spanking as their last resort in handling kids with disruptive behavior caused by ADHD in classroom setting. This implies that most teachers in primary school in the study area have not been able to come up with a workable strategy for handling cases of ADHD among primary school children. Majority of the teachers indicated that spanking is their last resort to handling cases of ADHD and spanking according to ADHD expert, Kesseler (2016), spanking hurts ADHD kids a lot as they are very sensitive to punishment. 10% of the respondents agreed that they do criticize ADHD kids, 8% said that they used after-class chat and encouragement, 5% said they do reward the child behavior, 4% attested to the use of detention and ignoring the child’s misbehavior respectively, 2% said they use clear instructions in handling ADHD kids in the class, 2% also agreed abusing children with ADHD, another 2% of the participants said they have tried expulsion of the kid in extreme cases, 1% said they tease kids out of frustration and another 2% of the respondents agreed that they used other forms of punishment such as asking the kids to kneel down, sweeping a dirty school compound etc, in checking disruptive behaviors of ADHD children. None of the respondents reported referrals of ADHD cases for appropriate diagnosis. They reported ignorance of ADHD, lack of job satisfaction, government attitude towards funding education and lack of ADHD experts cum specialist in area as major reasons. This indicates that only 29% of the teachers in the study area use positive techniques in handling children with ADHD while 71% used negative techniques. Some of the positive techniques used by teachers include rewarding child’s behavior, ignoring child’s misbehavior, giving clear instruction and use of after-class chat are ways of motivating the children to learn and also minimizing destructive behavior in classroom.

However, there is still the need to encourage and educate more teachers on the importance of using positive approaches to handling cases of ADHD rather than negative approaches. Again, from the analysis carried out above, majority of the teachers used negative techniques such as criticism, teasing, use of abusive words, detention, expulsion and other forms of punishment which are very derogatory, discouraging and abusive to children with ADHD. It therefore becomes very necessary to educate and inculcate in primary school teachers the best positive techniques for handling cases of ADHD.

In terms of the various challenges encountered by the teachers in classroom management of ADHD kids, 10% of the sampled population complained of lesson plan interruption, 30% agreed that they dissipate their energy in spanking ADHD kids, 25% said that their greatest challenge is ignorance of ADHD, another 10% of the participants agreed to the of use consistent verbal reprimands in harsh tones in classroom management of kids perceived to have ADHD, 5% said they confront the kids in class, another 25% said they are bored and exhausted in handling classroom situations involving ADHD kids as the kids finds it extremely difficult in following instructions. This implies that ADHD is not only a problem to pupils alone but also to teachers in the study area. Where there are many pupils with ADHD, teaching and learning processes are often disrupted with the teacher finding it difficult to manage the classroom in most cases.
Conclusion
This study examined the prevalence of ADHD among primary children in Ebonyi state South east Nigeria and its attendant classroom management implications for teachers. The researchers specifically investigated the type of ADHD preponderant in Ebonyi state, primary school teacher’s awareness of ADHD and classroom management strategies adopted by these teachers in handling ADHD kids. The conclusion drawn from the study is that ADHD, combined presentation is most prevalent in the study area. Also, most primary school teachers are not aware of the symptoms of ADHD in some of the kids they teach. The study also revealed that classroom teachers in Ebonyi state use unprofessional strategies such spanning, criticism, abuses and punishment in handling ADHD kids in classroom.

Recommendations
There are abundant scientific evidences supporting the existence of ADHD and its detrimental impact on individuals. Since findings of this survey indicated that the majority of teachers in the primary school in Ebonyi state lack the knowledge of ADHD thereby using classroom practices that is not reducing the problematic behaviors associated with ADHD in classroom settings, the following recommendations are therefore made:

1. Epidemiological survey on ADHD should be carried out in primary schools in Ebonyi state for effective diagnosis.
2. Primary school teachers in Ebonyi state should be given a compulsory classroom-based behavior training to improve their professional practice that will raise the achievement of students with educational needs such as ADHD.
3. Since medical and psychological interventions are generally effective in reducing disruptive and off-task behavior in students with ADHD, Ebonyi State Government should train more personnel to that respect.
4. Enlightenment campaigns should be launched via the mass media to create more awareness of ADHD in children in Ebonyi state Nigeria.
5. Parents should be given behavior management training so as to be able to manage ADHD at homes.

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